IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

~~for~~ write protecting a storage medium that includes game data for operating a gaming machine such that the game data is not alterable through use of ~~the~~ circuitry or programming of the gaming machine, the storage medium including a data register capable of receiving external data after ~~when at least~~ one or more load ~~condition~~ conditions of the data register ~~is~~ are enabled, ~~the method comprising:~~ the write protecting including,

decoding an address of the storage medium, wherein the address is selected by an external device; and

if the selected address matches an address of the data register, disabling at least one of the one or more load ~~condition~~ conditions of the data register.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one of the one or more load ~~condition~~ conditions includes a write enable input of the storage medium.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one of the one or more load ~~condition~~ conditions includes card enable inputs of the storage medium.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the ~~at least~~ one or more load ~~condition~~ conditions include ~~includes~~ a plurality of load conditions, wherein ~~such that~~ the data register is capable of receiving the external data when ~~a~~ the plurality of load conditions are enabled, and wherein the ~~step of~~ disabling the at least one load condition includes disabling one or more of the plurality of load conditions.

5-8 (Cancelled)

9. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for write protecting a storage medium of a gaming machine, the apparatus comprising:~~, the storage medium containing game data for~~

~~operating the gaming machine, the storage medium including a data register capable of receiving external data one load condition of the data register enabled, the apparatus comprising:~~

means for decoding an address of the storage medium, the address selected by an external device, the storage medium containing game data for operating a gaming machine, and the storage medium including a data register capable of receiving external data ~~when~~ after ~~at least~~ one or more load conditions of the data register ~~is~~are enabled; and

means for disabling ~~the~~ at least one of the one or more load conditions of the data register if the selected address matches an address of the data register such that the ~~critical~~ game data is not alterable through use of ~~the~~ circuitry or programming of the gaming machine.

10. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the at least one of the one or more load ~~condition~~ conditions includes a write enable input of the storage medium.

11. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the at least one of the one or more load ~~condition~~ conditions includes card enable inputs of the storage medium.

12. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the ~~at least~~ one or more load ~~condition includes~~ conditions include a plurality of load conditions, wherein ~~such that~~ the data register is capable of receiving the external data when the plurality of load conditions are enabled, and wherein the means for disabling the load condition disables one or more of the plurality of load conditions.

13. (Canceled)

14. (Currently Amended) A ~~control system for operating a~~ gaming machine~~,~~ comprising:

a processor;

a storage medium for storing game ~~critical~~ data and including a data register capable of receiving external data when ~~at least one~~ a load condition of the data register is enabled; and

write protection logic for decoding an address of the storage medium, the address selected by an external device and, if the selected address matches an address of the data register, disabling the ~~at least one~~ load condition of the data register such that the ~~critical~~ game data is not alterable through use of ~~the~~ circuitry or programming of the gaming machine.

15. (Currently Amended) The ~~control system~~ gaming machine of claim 14, wherein the storage medium includes removable ~~flash~~ memory.

16. (Currently Amended) The ~~control system~~ gaming machine of claim 14, wherein the ~~at least one~~ load condition includes a write enable input of the storage medium.

17. (Currently Amended) The ~~control system~~ gaming machine of claim 14, wherein the ~~at least one~~ load condition includes card enable inputs of the storage medium.

18. (Currently Amended) The ~~control system~~ gaming machine of claim 14, wherein the ~~at least one~~ load condition includes a plurality of load conditions such that the data register is capable of receiving the external data only when the plurality of load conditions are enabled, and wherein the ~~means for~~ disabling the load condition includes disabling ~~disables~~ one or more of the plurality of load conditions.

19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 4, wherein the ~~step of~~ disabling the at least one of the one or more load ~~condition~~ conditions includes disabling one of the plurality of load conditions.

20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 4, wherein the ~~step of~~ disabling the at least one of the one or more load ~~condition~~ conditions includes disabling two of the plurality of load conditions.

21-22 (Canceled)

23. (New) A method for write protecting a gaming machine storage medium, the method comprising:

preventing a write operation, wherein the write operation includes loading data into a data register of the gaming machine storage medium, and wherein the loading cannot be performed if a load condition of the data register is disabled, and wherein the preventing the write operation includes,

receiving an address of the data register from a device external to the gaming machine storage medium; and

disabling the load condition of the data register.

24. (New) The method of claim 23, wherein the gaming machine storage medium is a removable memory.

25. (New) The method of claim 24, wherein the receiving and the disabling are performed by a microcontroller connected to an interface of the removable memory.

26. (New) The method of claim 24, wherein the removable memory includes a 50-pin connector, a single-chip controller, and one or more flash memory modules.

27. (New) A machine-readable medium including instructions, which when executed by a gaming machine, cause the gaming machine to perform operations according to the method of claim 23.

28. (New) The machine-readable medium of claim 27, wherein the gaming machine storage medium is a removable memory.

29. (New) A gaming machine including:

a removable storage medium; and

a microcontroller for preventing a write operation to the removable storage medium,

wherein the write operation includes loading data into a data register of the removable storage medium, and wherein the loading cannot be performed if a load condition of the data register is disabled, and wherein the preventing the write operation includes,

receiving an address of the data register from a device external to the removable storage medium; and

disabling the load condition of the data register.